UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1991/L.4/Add.9
8 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Agenda item 15

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development

1. The Commission considered item 9 (d) of its agenda at its 443rd meeting on 7 February 1991. It had before it the report prepared by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) entitled "Case studies carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on qualitative aspects of development and on the preparations for the planned international statistical meeting on indicators of patterns of consumption" (E/CN.3/1991/21).

2. The Commission noted that four activities had been carried out under the agenda item. They comprised four country case studies (Côte d'Ivoire, India, Kenya, Morocco), a synthesis report based on those studies, a longer monograph drawing upon the recent literature and the past work of UNRISD on development indicators, and an international meeting of experts scheduled to be held in Rabat, Morocco, 8-11 April 1991.

3. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the high quality of the report prepared by UNRISD. The report did an excellent job of synthesizing useful findings and policy suggestions from the four case studies and from the Institute's own past work in the area. In particular, the Commission stressed the need to draw lessons from the case studies for the design of new and ongoing programmes by national authorities and the international development community. Particularly

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useful points in the report concerned the strengths and limitations of different data sources, the need to use the available data with care and caution, the problems identified in the case studies in using unitary or composite indices, the problems caused by data overloads and high costs, and the considerable scope for low-cost, innovative techniques. At the same time, the Commission considered it important that such innovative measurement techniques be placed in the context of ongoing statistical programmes and organizations so as to maximize the usefulness of the results obtained.

4. The Commission noted with appreciation the initiative taken by Morocco to strengthen its efforts to collect a comprehensive set of indicators on social development. The work of other international agencies in the field was also noted, including the work of FAO and WHO to update and improve indicators on health and nutrition status and the world food situation.

5. The Commission noted the importance and timeliness of the international seminar at Rabat, which would provide an opportunity to review the state of the art and recent advances in thinking on development indicators. It would also be an occasion for discussion of some of the major initiatives taken by the international agencies to strengthen the work on social indicators in developing countries. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the Government of Morocco and UNRISD for the preparatory work done for the seminar. It also noted with appreciation the close inter-agency co-operation in the planning of the seminar.

Action by the Commission

6. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the work undertaken by UNRISD in close co-operation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other international agencies, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/179;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the Government of Morocco for hosting the international expert seminar on social indicators of development;

(c) Urged UNRISD, in co-operation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other agencies to disseminate widely the findings and lessons of the case studies contained in the document prepared by UNRISD;

(d) Emphasized the importance of linking innovative indicators and collection techniques with ongoing statistical programmes and organizations;

(e) Requested the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activity to place the item in question on the agenda of its next meeting with a view to considering how the conclusions and suggestions contained in the UNRISD report might assist in the ongoing work and design of new programmes on social indicators.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1991/L.4/Add.10
11 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Agenda item 15

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ____. PRICE STATISTICS

1. The Commission considered item 7 of its agenda at its 442nd meeting, on 7 February 1991. The Commission had before it the report of the Secretary-General on developments in phase VI of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and on other related international comparison issues (E/CN.3/1991/17) and the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30).

2. The Commission commended the high quality of the report of the Secretary-General on developments in the International Comparison Programme. The issues, particularly those concerning the phase VI comparison, had been examined thoroughly. The Commission expressed appreciation of the comprehensive description of the application of ICP results. It recognized the increasing uses and high informative value of per capita real product, purchasing power parities and other results of ICP. In that context it was proposed that ICP be more widely publicized.

3. The Commission noted the status of completion of the phase V comparison, with 1985 as the reference year. While results were available for the European Community, OECD, the European Comparison Programme, the African comparison and the ESCAP comparison, basic data of the Caribbean region had just been submitted. Processing of the global comparison results by EUROSTAT would be started as soon as the processing of the Caribbean results had been completed. It was anticipated,

therefore, that the report of the phase V global comparisons would be finalized in the second half of 1991, as a joint publication by the organizations concerned. The Commission noted with regret the long time lag in producing the results of the phase V comparisons, although it recognized that the delay for phase V was similar to that experienced in previous phases of ICP.

4. With one or two reservations the Commission expressed strong support for the Programme. Many members expressed the view that the purchasing power parities resulting from the Programme would be a qualitatively superior substitute to the present use of exchange rates in international comparisons.

5. The Commission took note of certain limitations of the 1985 global results, in addition to those stemming from the time lag in their publication. It recognized that the small number of core countries introduced a degree of uncertainty in the links between regional comparisons.

6. The Commission considered that in the long run a better integration of ICP work with regular national statistical activities should be achieved, especially in the field of price statistics. Thus the additional burden on countries incurred by their participation in the Programme could be considerably reduced.

7. The Commission welcomed the significant support for various activities of phase VI of the Programme provided by several countries and a number of regional and international organizations. OECD and the European Community comparisons for phase VI were carried out on a rolling basis and results for reference year 1990 were expected to be ready by the end of the year. In Eastern Europe, five countries had started 1990 comparisons, co-ordinated by the Austrian Statistical Office.

8. With regard to the developing regions, the Commission acknowledged with appreciation the support provided by the Government of Japan that had enabled the phase VI comparison to be launched in the ESCAP region, with 15 participating countries and 1992 as the reference year. In addition to providing financial support for the ESCAP comparison, the Government of Japan had also offered to provide regional advisory services. The Commission took note of possible new sources of finance for phase VI in the region covered by ECLAC. It was informed that the Inter-American Development Bank and the ECLAC secretariat had begun discussions which could lead to support for a 1993 regional comparison. The Commission expressed appreciation of the continued interest of the European Community in supporting the regional comparison in the African region. Finally, the Commission was pleased to learn of the World Bank's plans to develop portable software for use by participating countries and regional commissions and to build up an electronic network for better communication between ICP-related organizations. The Bank would furthermore make available resources to foster comparison work in developing regions, channel funds for organizing workshops and provide technical assistance at the country level.

9. The Commission expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved in the preparation of the handbook on ICP and urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to make arrangements to revise the present draft and issue an

interim version of the handbook for immediate use by countries participating in the phase VI comparison. It welcomed the offer made by the Government of the United States of America to provide assistance in the finalization of the handbook.

10. The Commission was of the opinion that the regionalization, and consequently the decentralization, of the processing of information established a closer connection between the input countries provided and the output they received. It considered that that could contribute to a better use of ICP results for analytical purposes at the national level. EUROSTAT indicated that it was prepared, if necessary, to assume responsibility for processing the global results as it had done in phase V.

11. The Commission recommended that a global comparison be carried out in phase VI. It noted that most of the necessary preconditions for a satisfactory global comparison had been met, but that there might still be insufficient resources, at the global level, to ensure that all necessary travel could be carried out. The Commission stressed that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat had to maintain close contact with organizers of the regional comparisons to ensure the required degree of consistency among the comparisons and improve comparability of the basic data collected and processed in the developing regions. The Commission noted that the character of the report on the global comparisons for phase VI of ICP would depend on the degree of consistency of the regional results that could be achieved.

12. The Commission was of the opinion that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat should perform a central role in ICP, focusing on the co-ordination of the global comparison and dissemination of technical documents to ensure the integrity of the global comparison and promote the implementation of a uniform methodology for ICP. The Commission recognized that a number of developing countries, particularly those participating in ICP for the first time, required technical support and advice from the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. It endorsed the division of responsibilities between the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the organizers of the regional comparisons and concluded that carrying out operational tasks at the regional level would be the latter's responsibility.

13. The Commission suggested that work on the global comparison be organized according to the proposed timetable. There was a need, however, to elaborate a more refined schedule of work at both the regional and global levels.

14. The Commission stressed the necessity of holding frequent consultations among the organizations involved in ICP work in order to resolve undetermined methodological and organizational issues and to work out strategies for overcoming various kinds of difficulties that would impede the timely completion of phase VI. It was stressed that that aim could be achieved only by close co-operation and joint efforts of the organizations concerned. In that context, the important role of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on the International Comparison Programme was emphasized.

15. Several members of the Commission made proposals on particular points of the methodology. The Commission discussed the attributes of the core country method versus the core commodity approach and suggested that core commodities be used to facilitate linking regional results in phase VI. A suggestion was made for a group of experts to be established to consider details relating to the core commodity approach. The Commission recognized that the change-over to the core commodity approach would entail a shift of workload from countries to the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. It noted that the Statistical Office was working to complete the core commodity list, which would be made available for incorporation into the regional lists of commodities.

Action taken by the Commission

16. The Commission:

(a) Took note of the status of completion of phase V of the International Comparison Programme and urged that the global results to be published as quickly as possible;

(b) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to expedite the completion, publication and dissemination of the handbook on the International Comparison Programme;

(c) Emphasized the need for the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to perform a central co-ordinating role in the implementation of the International Comparison Programme;

(d) Stressed the importance of convening meetings of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on the International Comparison Programme so that technical and organizational issues could be agreed upon;

(e) Reaffirmed the regionalization of the International Comparison Programme as the basic approach to obtaining internationally comparable results;

(f) Endorsed the core commodity approach as the viable methodology for linking the regional comparison to derive global results in phase VI;

(g) Encouraged wider publicity of the results of the International Comparison Programme at the national and international levels;

(h) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a report on developments in phase VI of the International Comparison Programme and on other related international comparison issues.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1991/L.4/Add.11
11 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Agenda item 15

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

C. Social statistics and indicators

1. The Commission considered item 9 (c) of its agenda at its 444th meeting, on 8 February 1991. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest and the development of related national data bases (E/CN.3/1991/20);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (E/CN.3/1991/24);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30).

2. The Commission expressed its great appreciation of the technical quality of the reports and discussed a number of technical issues raised in them. The complex nature of social phenomena and the considerable skills and resources necessary to measure them reliably were particularly emphasized. It was agreed that the efficient organization of data sources and availability of the necessary skills in countries were key factors for the success of monitoring. The necessary mobilization and organization of country resources would have to be tackled on a country-by-country basis. It also agreed that one of the key requirements, which was very difficult to meet, was the organization and interpretation of the complex statistics needed in the reports, which could reach a wide and non-specialized audience.

3. The Commission considered in some detail the appropriate role and orientation of social indicators programmes at the national, regional and international levels in the context of practical requirements for monitoring, planning and evaluation. The Commission welcomed the comments of the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on policy applications at the country level of indicators in fields of concern to UNICEF and to other organizations of the United Nations system. The Commission agreed that considerable effort was needed to implement indicator programmes responsive to the highest priority social concerns and objectives established and approved by Governments in key international forums and within the framework of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. Such programmes should comprise a mix of data collection activities and techniques as well as methods of analysis, compilation and co-ordination and would require technical co-operation support for many developing countries.

4. Programmes should be geared to operational requirements in countries to support policy decisions and programme implementation in addition to monitoring. Data should be provided on a nearly continuous basis and be up to date. The Commission agreed that programmes should be geared to providing a selected number of core series in social statistics. However, it was essential that they be collected, compiled and analysed in sufficient detail, with possibilities of disaggregation by small geographical areas and special population groups, to show real progress and bring out issues in the social fields. It was recognized that general averages and estimates had limited uses and could be misleading. The Commission strongly agreed that composite or unitary indexes of social progress were technically unsound and inappropriate for international comparisons.

5. Several members expressed the view that much more work was needed to clarify the statistical implications and better develop the methods needed to measure the social goals and objectives referred to in the reports before the Commission. Some members expressed scepticism about whether the goals and objectives adopted in international forums were realistic. In that context, the representative of the World Bank expressed regret that more use had not been made of the framework and methods developed by the Bank for measuring living standards.

6. The Commission agreed that the programme of pilot studies referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1991/20) would provide practical experience and an assessment at the country level of statistical gaps that the monitoring

programme could address as well as technical parameters of a full scale programme. That, in turn, would provide a sound basis for focusing the programme on core data requirements and indicators and determining realistically the steps to be taken to ensure that needs were met. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the additional valuable experience provided by the case studies described by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in its report submitted to the Commission for consideration under item 9 (d) (E/CN.3/1991/21).

7. The Commission endorsed the programme for monitoring achievement of social goals in the 1990s. It agreed that the technical, organizational and policy challenges posed by monitoring requirements were formidable but was of the opinion that action on a major programme along the lines described in the report was timely and urgent and that the pilot studies should be implemented as quickly as possible. The adverse trends in human development in many countries in the past decade had drawn new attention to the need for better monitoring and indicators and demonstrated clearly that urgent action was necessary. New opportunities and new awareness of social concerns and disparities could support and sustain a sound monitoring programme. The Commission noted a number of regional activities and initiatives already under way which provided essential experience and momentum in the field of social statistics and indicators, such as the new annual social report on Latin America and the Caribbean, paralleling the annual economic report of ECLAC. The social report would provide, for the first time, regular and timely indicators for the region on such pressing issues as employment, distribution of income, poverty, children and youth.

8. The Commission stressed the importance of a concrete and pragmatic approach to monitoring; it fully appreciated the challenges involved, however. Data collection programmes and country capacities should not be overloaded nor should new programmes be undertaken which might duplicate, overlap or compete with existing ones. The Commission agreed that it was essential to carefully select priorities in statistical work and make the fullest use of data generated by the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the Demographic and Health Survey programme (DHS) sponsored by USAID, the Pan-Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD) executed by the League of Arab States, the Inter-Agency Food and Nutritional Surveillance Programme (IFNS) sponsored by UNICEF, FAO and WHO and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project, both executed by the World Bank.

9. The Commission discussed in detail the importance of full co-ordination at three levels: between institutions within a country; among international organizations at the country and international levels; and between countries and international organizations. Those efforts should involve, inter alia, co-ordination and agreement in choice and technical specification of indicators for monitoring. The Commission agreed that countries should take the initiative to ensure adequate co-ordination in indicators collection and analysis activities at the national level but noted the problems faced by developing countries trying to ensure such co-ordination. It noted with concern that national statistical services had to deal with a multiplicity of multilateral and bilateral agencies interested in statistical and monitoring issues, many of which dealt directly with other substantive ministries in their Governments. Sectoral programmes tended to

call for a wide and proliferating range of indicators that often overlapped and were not standardized technically. In spite of those obstacles, a number of successful social statistics programmes were cited in which technical co-operation had greatly contributed to improved social statistics. The Commission welcomed the possibilities for improved co-ordination described in the report on monitoring.

10. The Commission welcomed the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, in co-operation with and with support from many other organizations, on statistics on special population groups, including disabled persons, the elderly, and young people. It expressed its particular appreciation of the contribution made by the Statistical Office to focusing world-wide attention and development efforts on statistics on disabled persons, including the publication of the Disability Statistics Compendium, and the elderly and noted with satisfaction the support for the work on disability statistics expressed by the representative of Disabled Persons International. The Commission agreed that statistics on disabled persons was a particularly complex field in which countries were anxious to have international support and guidance and welcomed the proposal of the Statistical Office to convene, with WHO, an expert group to review applications of the WHO International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH).

11. The Commission expressed strong support for the work of the Statistical Office in the development of statistics on women. The work included methodology, compilation and training for measuring women's contribution in the economy and the informal sector, drawing on the framework of national accounts, and technical co-operation.

12. The Commission expressed particular appreciation of the extent of co-ordination and collaboration achieved in the United Nations system in the programmes on women's statistics and special population groups. It noted that those programmes provided invaluable experience and inputs to the monitoring programme; it fully supported the continuation and further development of those programmes.

Action by the Commission

13. The Commission:

(a) Commended the Statistical Office, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO for the progress achieved in technical and organizational planning for the programme for social monitoring in the 1990s;

(b) Welcomed the interest and progress of both developed and developing countries in improving their social statistics and indicators suitable for monitoring social progress and objectives and guiding policy;

(c) Endorsed the overall effort to develop a programme for monitoring social goals in the 1990s and recommended the fastest possible action to implement the programme on a pragmatic basis, with a view to ensuring initial results within two to three years;

(d) Recommended that the lead offices in the social monitoring effort intensify their efforts to ensure the broadest possible national, regional and international participation and contributions to the programme, consistent with ensuring focused priority on a limited set of practical statistical objectives;

(e) Suggested that the participating organizations and countries work together to ensure the greatest possible cost-effectiveness in data collection, tabulation and analysis for the desired indicators, and in co-ordinated international social reporting;

(f) Endorsed the work programme and activities of the Statistical Office on statistics on women and on special population groups and recommended the maximum possible support for countries interested in developing their statistics in that field;

(g) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session a report on the programme to monitor the achievement of social goals in the 1990s and related methodological work.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1991/L.4/Add.12
11 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Agenda item 15

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION

A. Technical co-operation in statistics

1. The Commission considered item 11 (a) of its agenda at its 445th and 446th meetings, on 8 February 1991. It had before it the following documents: (a) Report of the Secretary-General on technical co-operation in statistics (E/CN.3/1991/25); (b) Report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30).

2. The Commission welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on technical co-operation in statistics (E/CN.3/1991/25) and expressed appreciation to the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat for its preparation. It noted that by limiting the data to multilateral agencies, the comparability of information on expenditures had been substantially improved, though limited in scope.

3. The Commission was of the opinion that the inclusion in the report of information on priorities for statistical development reported by the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other multilateral programmes was useful. The Commission noted that the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation

for Development worked within its area of competence, at the request of Member States in support of the efforts of Member States and the priorities they determined for their own development. For UNDP, national plans and priorities were the frame of reference for operational activities. UNFPA concentrated its resources in those developing countries that had the most serious population problems and the most urgent need for assistance. In addition, UNFPA had increasingly emphasized activities aimed at improving the role and status of women. The overall goal of technical co-operation generally was the attainment of self-reliance in developing countries through national capacity-building.

4. The Commission made a number of suggestions for further improvement of the report: information should be supplied on expenditure in real terms; agencies supplying information should have an opportunity to review the text of the report before it was made final; information should be provided on personnel by headquarters and field staff and by short-term and long-term staff; expenditure on technical co-operation in statistics should be compared with the total expenditure for technical co-operation; a more detailed classification of expenditure by subject area should be provided; a breakdown of training by subject area should be included; and more detailed information on technical co-operation projects in Africa should be provided.

5. The Commission was pleased to learn that an updated edition of the Directory of Technical Co-operation in Statistics (ST/ESA/STAT/105/Rev.2) had been issued. It noted that the Directory included information on technical co-operation in statistics available from multilateral and bilateral agencies. Further, it was an instrument by which developing countries could gain access to international assistance and by which donor countries and agencies could co-ordinate their programmes. The Commission recommended that revised updated editions of the Directory be published and methods explored for disseminating the information more quickly.

6. Several representatives provided information on their countries' bilateral programmes of technical co-operation in statistics. Representatives of regional commissions and international organizations also provided additional information. It was stressed that the output of an effective national statistical system was essential for sound development planning and programmes and that technical co-operation in statistics should encompass promotion of the use of statistics by planners.

7. Many members from developing countries expressed their appreciation of the technical co-operation in statistics provided, and the support provided by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in co-operation with the regional commissions. One member stressed that the mechanism of project implementation should be improved. The time required for project approval should be reduced, as should the time between the purchase of equipment and its delivery.

8. The Commission noted that during the period under review technical co-operation projects covered a wide variety of statistical subjects and was pleased to note the increase in the financial support given to the programme by UNFPA, UNDP, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and other multilateral and

bilateral agencies. The subjects covered were multisector statistics; economic statistics, including national accounts; demographic statistics, including population censuses, census and survey cartography, sampling and surveys, household surveys and statistics on women and on special population groups; and data processing and informatics. The Commission recognized that the sharp increase in resources provided for technical co-operation in demographic statistics during 1989 and 1990 could be attributed to the peak in support for national population and housing census activities associated with the 1990 World Programme. Nevertheless, the Commission reiterated the concern expressed at its twenty-fifth session that the "share of resources available for economic statistics was diminishing" (E/1989/21, para. 167) and urged donors that had economic statistics within their mandates to increase the level of their support to such technical co-operation.

9. Statistical training, during the period, remained a highly important aspect of the technical co-operation programme in statistics and the Commission expressed satisfaction that the overall funding for training had increased. The Commission noted, however, that expenditures on training included only fellowships, study tours, workshops and seminars and excluded expenditures classified under personnel related to such training activities as national-level training courses and on-the-job training. Due to the importance of that field, the Commission urged the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to increase support for that component of the programme.

10. The Commission stressed the importance of co-ordination among organizations providing technical co-operation in statistics and the critical role of the recipient country in the co-ordination process. It emphasized the role of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in promoting co-ordination of technical co-operation projects in statistics. However, in view of the overall importance of co-ordination, the suggestion was made to set up an independent group that, taking into consideration the mandate of the different organizations concerned, would assess the various activities under way to see whether or not there was duplication in technical co-operation.

11. The Commission noted that General Assembly resolution 44/211 and decision 90/26 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme provided the overall framework for United Nations technical co-operation activities in all fields and for a new agency support cost system. The Commission understood that the aim of the new system, which would become effective in January 1992, was to enhance the technical capabilities of institutions in developing countries through national execution of programmes at the country level, requiring the United Nations system to adjust to the co-operative programmes. The Commission strongly recommended that the implementation of the decisions on new agency support cost arrangements not affect negatively the implementation of the technical co-operation programme in statistics. Since consultations on those arrangements were currently in progress and their impact was unclear, the Commission was of the view that a report should be prepared for its twenty-seventh session on the new arrangements and their impact on technical co-operation in statistics.

Action taken by the Commission

12. The Commission:

(a) Stressed the great importance of technical co-operation programmes with developing countries and endorsed the current technical co-operation activities in statistics carried out by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development with the substantive technical support of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat;

(b) Emphasized the importance of the training component in the implementation of country projects and urged that resources allocated to that component be increased;

(c) Stressed the importance of co-ordination in multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation in statistical activities and urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to continue to promote such co-ordination in collaboration with other international organizations;

(d) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a report on technical co-operation in statistics, including information on the impact of General Assembly resolution 44/211 and the new agency support cost arrangements on the provision of technical co-operation in statistics.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1991/L.4/Add.13
11 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Agenda item 15

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

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Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ____. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

B. National Household Survey Capability Programme

1. The Commission considered item 11 (b) of its agenda at its 445th meeting on 8 February 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on progress in implementation and co-ordination of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (E/CN.3/1991/26).

2. The Commission noted with appreciation that the report was informative and of high quality.

3. The Commission expressed appreciation for the accomplishments of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), recognizing its dynamism, its effectiveness in promoting household surveys in developing countries, its role in mobilizing technical and other support for country survey programmes, the importance of household surveys as a tool in the collection of a wide range of basic economic, social and demographic statistics and the benefits that have been realized by countries that have participated in the Programme.

4. The Commission considered that the technical studies produced and the training workshops carried out by NHSCP were relevant and of high quality and standard. It noted that further technical research studies on methodology were a continuing need in the field of household surveys and urged that NHSCP continue that important activity and make its reports widely available. In that regard, the Commission noted the progress made in the preparation of the manual on collecting literacy data through household surveys. The Commission was aware of the fact that several countries, while not formally participating in NHSCP, had been using the NHSCP technical studies and methodological guidelines. In a few cases, countries had even established integrated and coordinated household survey programmes as promoted by NHSCP using their own resources.

5. The Commission also considered that the regional commissions had made significant contributions to NHSCP, citing the importance of regional advisers and regional workshops and training efforts. Further, the Commission expressed its appreciation for the ongoing provision of advisory services by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the region covered by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and welcomed the continuation of its advisory services in the region covered by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), where the ILO adviser devoted 80 per cent of his time to NHSCP activities. In contrast, the Commission expressed its concern at the situation in the region covered by the Economic Comission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), where there was currently no regional adviser owing to a shortage of funds. It was also agreed that there was a strong need for the continuation of the NHSCP training programme in New Delhi. The contributions made towards training at the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) by ESCAP and by the NHSCP technical advisers were also appreciated and encouraged to continue.

6. The Commission noted with appreciation that NHSCP continued to accommodate the sectoral concerns of the specialized agencies, such as ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in national household survey programmes organized with its technical support. The Commission urged the continuation of the collaborative efforts of NHSCP with other specialized agencies, especially in the development of technical studies and national capabilities through training workshops.

7. The Commission stressed the importance of the evaluations of country programmes that have been conducted for NHSCP and urged that such evaluations be undertaken for many other countries.

8. The Commission was of the view that NHSCP had ably demonstrated itself as a model in technical cooperation arrangements and that consideration should be given to establishing a similar programme for the collection of establishment-based statistics using NHSCP as a prototype.

9. The Commission expressed its strong support for the continuation of NHSCP after the end of 1991. It noted in particular that (a) many countries that have recently joined NHSCP would require technical co-operation support and other inputs over the next several years, (b) another 23 countries that had already prepared

project proposals were in various stages of entry into NHSCP and would need to be supported, (c) many other countries in the developing regions have expressed interest in joining NHSCP, and (d) a number of countries have recently conducted population consensus, or were in the process of doing so, and that essential resource should be exploited in the context of NHSCP for the development of household sampling frames. In view of the continuing needs and the proven effectiveness of the programme, the Commission stressed the importance of continuing the Programme, including its global and regional components.

10. Accordingly, the Commission welcomed the discussions currently ongoing with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for continuation of support after 1991 and the intention of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to continue its support for NHSCP beyond 1991, both at the country and the global level. It also took note of the UNFPA plan to develop a socio-cultural and demographic survey programme in Africa, which would be implemented under the umbrella of NHSCP with arrangements for technical cooperation similar to those for the Pan Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD), and the proposed support of UNFPA for an interregional programme for research after 1991. The Commission welcomed the indication of support from the Government of the United Kingdom for household survey programmes in countries participating in NHSCP, particularly in the context of their training needs.

11. The Commission noted that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had provided support for the global component of NHSCP in recent years on the understanding that the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations Secretariat would assume responsibility for the Central Co-ordinating Unit of NHSCP as of 1992. However, as noted in the Commission's discussion of agenda item 11 (a), new developments have occurred in response to General Assembly resolution 44/211 on national execution and Governing Council resolution 90/37 on agency support costs which might substantially reduce the resources available to the Department to support this and other activities. The Commission was informed that the Department was currently holding discussions with UNDP and UNFPA on the new support costs arrangements, but the final outcome of those discussions was not at all certain.

12. Despite those uncertainties, the Commission attached the highest priority to finding ways to continue the essential support for NHSCP. All possible avenues of support should be utilized, including resources made available under the new agency support costs arrangements, the regular budget of the United Nations and any other arrangements that can be developed.

Action taken by the Commission

13. The Commission:

(a) Commended NHSCP as a model programme of technical cooperation that was both dynamic and effective in providing assistance and support for developing countries;

(b) Urged multilateral and bilateral organizations to continue to support country projects and programmes designed to strengthen national survey-taking capabilities and carried out under the umbrella of NHSCP;

(c) Strongly recommended the extension of NHSCP beyond 1991 and urged that all possible avenues of support for its activities at the global and regional levels be utilized, including resources made available under the new agency support costs arrangments, the regular budget of the United Nations and any other arrangements that can be developed;

(d) Recognized with appreciation the supportive role played by the regional commissions and urged the strengthening of the regional advisory services in household surveys;

(e) In the context of household surveys, supported the need for continuous development of technical studies, training and interregional workshops and general technical assistance on methods and techniques.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.3/1991/L.4/Add.14
11 February 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Agenda item 15

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

B. Civil registration and vital statistics

1. The Commission considered item 9 (b) of its agenda at its 443rd meeting, on 7 February 1991. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on progress in civil registration and vital statistics (E/CN.3/1991/19);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30).

2. The Commission was of the opinion that the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.3/1991/19) provided valuable and timely information on the progress made in the field of civil registration and vital statistics in different parts of the world since the subject was last discussed by the Commission (in 1981, at the twenty-first session). It expressed satisfaction that the revised Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods and the study on approaches in population censuses to collecting information for estimating vital rates had been completed. It requested that the Handbook be disseminated widely for use by national registration authorities, statistical offices and others concerned with the subject. The Commission emphasized the importance of national civil registration

systems and the collection and compilation of vital statistics, nationally and internationally, for the timely and cost-effective monitoring of population, health and related programmes.

3. The Commission welcomed the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems, developed jointly by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics, and gave its strong support to the programme. It noted with satisfaction that a number of other organizations, including the United Nations regional commissions, the Pan American Health Organization and the International Statistical Institute, would participate in the implementation of the Programme. The Commission invited other international, regional and bilateral organizations to participate in and support the Programme.

4. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the Programme was country oriented and employed a number of new strategies designed to overcome some of the weaknesses of recent technical co-operation efforts in the field of civil registration and vital statistics in order to allow sustainability nationally. Such strategies involved (a) the structured diagnosis of problems on a country-by-country basis; (b) concentration on the improvement of national civil registration systems rather than pilot studies; (c) adoption by countries of national registration improvement plans along with the commitment of necessary national support; and (d) initial focus on those developing countries which offered the best opportunities for achieving complete registration of events in the short run so that the lessons learned could be applied to other developing countries.

5. Some members expressed concern about the willingness of countries to invest the resources and staff necessary to participate in the Programme and about their long-term commitment to continue civil registration operations since improvement of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in developing countries could, in certain circumstances, require a large amount of financial resources. It was pointed out, that in many countries, improvement of national civil registration and vital statistics systems would require not only that methodological problems be solved but that socio-cultural, legal and administrative obstacles be overcome. Motivation of the population was seen as a critical factor in improving national registration systems. However, the Commission was of the opinion that the new strategies embodied in the Programme might help to overcome a number of those obstacles. It expressed the hope that the guidelines adopted by donor organizations in the field of civil registration and vital statistics would be reviewed in the light of the Programme's strategies. In that regard, the Commission recommended that monitoring to evaluate programme achievements be continued.

6. Many Commission members from developing countries referred to their experience in upgrading their national registration systems. They attached great importance to the Programme and expressed interest in joining it so as to strengthen civil registration and improve the availability of vital statistics in their countries.

7. The Commission welcomed the financial support provided by UNFPA and UNICEF for the initial phase of the Programme and the willingness of UNFPA to commit additional funds for the period 1992-1995. It noted that a portion of UNFPA support was conditional upon other multilateral or bilateral organizations matching that support.

8. The Commission stressed the importance of co-ordination of activities among the various organizations participating in the Programme. It expressed its appreciation of the offer made by UNFPA to act as the focal point for co-ordinating multilateral and bilateral resources for the Programme. The co-ordination role would be carried out in close co-operation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, which would be responsible for overall substantive co-ordination.

9. The Commission urged the organizations sponsoring the Programme to conduct promotional activities worldwide and to proceed with the implementation of the Programme. The work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, in co-operation with the regional commissions and PAHO, was particularly stressed.

10. The Commission welcomed the suggestion to conduct workshops in Latin America and in Africa as part of the Programme and expressed its appreciation to the Government of Argentina for offering to act as host for one of the workshops. The Commission stressed that the objective of any workshop should be clearly defined before it was organized.

Action taken by the Commission

11. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the phased implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems and expressed its appreciation to the organizations that had developed the Programme and to UNFPA and UNICEF for providing initial financial support;

(b) Stressed the central role of national efforts in the success of the Programme, including diagnosis of obstacles to complete and timely registration and the adoption of national registration improvement plans along with the commitment of the necessary national support;

(c) Accepted the offer of UNFPA to provide the mechanism for co-ordinating support for the Programme from other multilateral and bilateral organizations and noted the importance of a co-ordinated approach;

(d) Urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, in co-operation with the regional commissions, WHO, PAHO and the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics, among others, to proceed with the training and other components of the Programme as rapidly as possible;

(e) Requested the Secretary-General to keep the Commission informed about the progress achieved in implementing the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems and related methodological work.